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ABSTRACT

A collaborative program between two university departments aims to better prepare preservice and inservice school counselors and vocational rehabilitation counselors to cooperate in facilitating the transition of individuals with disabilities from school to community living. The program offers preservice (master's level) rehabilitation and school-counseling students 9 semester hours of training that includes a special education elective, transition competencies, and a one-semester practicum. Student evaluation of the transition course indicated that there were too many speakers and too little time for coverage of 14 competencies. Preservice students in school guidance completed transition practicum requirements in concert with their part-time counseling practicum, while rehabilitation counseling students completed the transition practicum requirements as part of their full-time internship. In general, process and product ratings by students and supervisors were very positive. Includes tables of transition competencies and practicum activities. (KS)

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Training School and Rehabilitation Counselors to Provide Cooperative Transition Services

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The many transitions undertaken by students with disabilities include one which is perhaps the most difficult-the transition from school to successful community living. There are many variables which make this transition processes difficult, ranging from difficulty in making friends (c.f. Shafer, Rice, Metzler & Haring, 1989) to difficulty in finding employment (c.f. Hasazi, Gordon & Roe, 1985). Perhaps a major difficulty is the transitioning students' lack of contact with agencies such as State Vocational Rehabilitation. As many as one half of all transitioning students are not availing themselves of agencies organized to meet their needs (c.f. Roessler, Brolin & Johnson, 1990). This aspect of the transition process has received increasing attention since IDEA (PL 101-476, 1990) mandated that transition plans be added in IEPs and included vocational rehabilitation counseling as a related service for students with disabilities.

In order for students with disabilities to increase their possibilities of contacting appropriate adult service providers they need to have better linkages. Parents, advocates and school personnel can work together to begin to provide these linkages. Which school personnel are best suited for this task has been a concern. Several States have authorized positions such as transition coordinators, but who should fill these positions and how they would be funded remains unsettled (c.f., Gajar, Goodman, & McAfee, 1993). Expanding the roles of extant school personnel such as guidance counselors may begin to improve the transition process for students with disabilities.

School guidance and vocational rehabilitation counselors are peers who should be able to cooperate in the transition process as they both receive training in skills such as student social adjustment problems and post-school decision-making needs. But, rehabilitation counselors often have not been trained to understand (special) education problems and school guidance counselors often have not been trained to work with individuals with disabilities on their transition needs. Several States do not require general educators or guidance counselors to develop competencies associated with students with disabilities. To address these situations in one State in Appalachia two university departments, with input from public schools and adult service agency representatives, designed an innovative collaborative program. The overall goal of the program was to better prepare preservice and inservice counselors to work with the transition process in areas which are largely rural. The program was funded as a training grant by OSERS.

Background and state of existing services

Prior to initiating the program, several interviews were undertaken with vocational rehabilitation and school guidance counselors and a survey of all full time school liasion (vocational rehabilitation) counselors was conducted. Interviewees revealed, among other information, that there had been a school liasion counselor program existing between vocational rehabilitation and the school districts in the State since 1970. Currently all 55 school districts are served by a school liasion counselor (SLC) on at least a part time basis. Difficulties in providing effective service reported by interviewees and survey respondents

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included: large case loads (SLC average 147, school counselors average over 250); "ruralness" (e.g., amount of territory covered by SLCs, distances between services and students, and lack of employment opportunities for students); lack of training (e.g., majority of SLCs indicated need for more training in special education, and need for internships in schools-none had done a school internship). Full time SLCs reported serving the following percentages of students (Table 1 Percentages of Students Served by Disability).

Table 1
Percentages of Students Served By Disability

	United States	State-wide (SW)	SLC	Difference Between SW% and SLC%
LD	48	46	32	- 14
MR	13	19	33.2	+ 14.2
ED	09	06	06.5	+ 00.5
Physical H. & OHI	02.3	01.4	24	+ 23.6
Hearing & Vision	01.9	01.4	03.8	+ 02.4

The difference between the percentage of students served in State-wide public school programs and those served by SLCs can partly be explained by the major difference in vocational rehabilitation services and public school services. The latter is an entitlement while the former has eligibility requirements.

Program Design and Competencies

The program was designed to offer preservice (masters level) rehabilitation and school counseling students nine semester hours of training in: a special education elective, transition competencies, and a one semester externship. Training during the first year included 14 transition competencies (See Table 2 Competency #1 -#11) offered in a summer session course. Each session of the four week course included a speaker involved with some aspect of transition - speakers ranged from parents and consumers to counselors and supported employment providers. All sessions and the overall course were evaluated by participating students, speakers were also asked to give feedback. Student evaluations revealed that there were probably too many speakers. They indicated that although all speakers were very knowledgeable, given the number of competencies to be covered, they tended to not be as interested in the speakers as they might be in another setting. During the second year, as a result of feedback from students and program advisory committee members, additional competencies were added and participating students voted on the competencies they thought most important (See Table 2 Transition Competencies). Other aspects of program evaluation were completed following the first year of the student externship (See Practicum below) and the revised program was extended to inservice rehabilitation and school counselors throughout the State in off-campus classes.

Table 2
Transition Competencies

____ Career Education	(Competency #1)
____ Transition programs	(Competency #1)
____ Community survey techniques, incl. job locating	(Competency #2)
____ Occupational references and data bases	(Competency #3)
____ Transition curriculum	(Competency #3)
____ Job analysis	(Competency #4)
____ Job matching	(Competency #4)
____ Vocational evaluation	(Competency #5)
____ Job accommodations	(Competency #6)
____ Parent involvement, training	(Competency #7)
____ Career guidance tools	(Competency #8)
____ (Student) Personal/social skills - knowledge of	(Competency #9)
____ Teaming and team building skills	(Competency #10)
____ Transition program evaluation & planning	(Competency #11)
____ Legislation & litigation concerning transition (e.g., Social Security)	
____ Interagency cooperation	
____ Specific disabilities' transition problems	
____ Case management	
____ Transition destinations (e.g., from day prgms. to post secondary training)	
____ Supported employment	
____ Supported living	
____ Future planning (incl. individualized prgms.- e.g., IEP, ITP, IWRP)	
____ Community and adult service agencies (e.g. types and services)	
____ (Student) Resume writing and job interview techniques	
____ Advocacy, incl. self advocacy	
____ Leisure/recreation skills development	
____ Support networks	
____ Other (please identify)	

Externship/Practicum

The externship was designed as a supervised three credit, semester long transition practicum (See Table 3 Practicum Credits, Hours & Outline of Activities). Preservice students in school guidance completed transition practicum requirements in concert with their part-time counseling practicum, while rehabilitiation counseling students completed the transition practicum requirements as part of their full-time internship. Regardless of their location, each student was required to contact their cooperating supervisor's counterpart in school or rehabilitation counseling for interviews and to arrange program visits (See ACTIVITIES).

Table 3
Practicum Credits, Hours & Outline of Activities

The Transition practicum was designed for 3 credit hours in special education. Activities required the practicum student to devote approximately one full day per week to the transition program (approx. 96 hrs total). In addition to the Practicum Meetings for School Counseling students (6 hrs), two full days (16 hrs) were spent by all practicum participants at the

Rehabilitation Counseling Students seminar.

Following is an outline of the activities and products completed during the semester.

ACTIVITIES

School Guidance Practicum Students	2 days Interview Voc. Rehab. counterpart	3days Visit post sec. prgms	2 days Interview Guidance Couns.	5 days Observe on site prgms.
	(Transition Practicum meetings of 11/2 hrs. each to be held Weeks: 3,6,8 & 13)			
Vocational Rehab. Practicum Students	2 days Interview Sch. Guidance Couns.	3 days Visit sch. prgms.	2 days Interview Voc. Rehab. Couns.	5 days Observe post sec. prgms.
	(Transition Supv. visits sites)			(Transition Supv. visits sites)

REQUIREMENTS*

Begin: Check List	Complete: Observations (Week 6)	Complete: Check List (Week 8)	Complete: Paper (Week 13-14)

*Participating students completed products including: a transition checklist, a series of observations, and a paper on the "state-of -the-art" of transition in their district/county.

Program Evaluation

The evaluation component of the training grant centered around student participants and their practicum supervisors. As one part of this component, project personnel developed and field tested an attitude scale concerned with individuals with disabilities and aspects of transition. This attitude scale was utilized as a pre and post test instrument with all students. Although only first year data has been collected, preliminary analysis indicates that the instrument does have some sensitivity in measuring attitude changes of participating students.

Another evaluation component was evaluation of the preservice Transition course, briefly discussed earlier in this paper. One of the problems cited on student evaluations of the community-based speakers was their (general) inability to be brief and concise - "most took too long to make too few points." A second course evaluation component concerned transition course competencies. Students felt that there was too little time for adequate coverage of 14 competencies (particularly in light of the time taken by community-based speakers) during a four week period. Off-campus inservice students are taking the transition course over a semester and have not completed it as of this writing.

Evaluation of the Practicum experience took the form of both process and product evaluation. Cooperating practicum/internship supervisors and university practicum supervisors rated students' ability to carry out the assignments and the resulting products. Students rated their supervisors, assignments, and their own products - products were shared with all participating students. Some practicum students also chose to share their reports with the districts/counties- as yet, little feedback has been received on the value of this information. In general, process and product ratings were very positive from all raters; one difficulty reported by the full-time internship rehabiltiation counselors was that other activities made it difficult to find times to schedule transition practicum activities. This information has resulted

in planned modifications of the practicum for preservice rehabilitation counselors. To date no inservice counselors have participated in practicum.

A final planned evaluation component of the project is a follow-up of program completers. This component is designed to contact the program completers and respective employers. Inservice counselor program completers are currently beginning their first positions following graduation and will be followed-up at six-month intervals.

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